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Brit Lit Final

Prompt #2

Prior to recent advances in technology, literature was the medium in which writers and scholars conveyed arguments. The beauty of literature is that these arguments could be developed and stylized in many different ways depending upon the writer, and the issue at hand. In Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew,*  arguments are presented in a humorous manner in effort to loosen the audience. In addition, this play is written unbiased, equitably, giving neither Kate nor Petruchio a definitive upper hand. On the contrary, Jonathan Swift uses dramatic satire in *A Modest Proposal.* By proposing a preposterous solution to a widely acknowledged problem, Swift captures the attention of the British government, and persuades them to take action. A third style of argumentation is that of John Donne. He uses logic along with emotion in his poetry to convey his message. Depending on the writer, and point of contest, British Literature saw a broad array of argument styles prior to 1800.

By making *Taming of the Shrew* a comedy, Shakespeare allows the viewer to assimilate more with the story. Beyond the humor however, lies the main beauty of the argument, that is parity. The play opens with the conflict of Petruchio trying to tame crazy Kate. They argue about trivial matters such as whether the object in the sky is the sun or the moon. “How bright and goodly shines the moon […] henceforth, so it shall be”. On the surface, the play appears to show Petruchio as the victor. Going with this perspective, it argues that a man should impart full power over his woman. In return, this woman should submit to him so they can both be happy. Another view can be taken on this argument, however. By consciously submitting to Petruchio’s petty demands, Kate would be given more freedom and privileges. Kate was the one who actually tamed Petruchio. Neither perspective is necessarily right. The beauty of this unbiased play is that the meaning is left up to the interpretation of the viewer or director. He or she is free to take the argument which ever way they see fit.

In the 18th century, Ireland was experiencing a combination of two problems: over population, and a food shortage. A satirical argument has the external appearance of persuading the audience one way, but upon closer review shifts the argument the other way. Jonathan Swift uses this transformation advantageously in *A Modest Proposal* to shock the reader. As the essay opens, it appears that he is agreeing with the English politicians. When the reader makes a double take when he hits a line in the middle of the passage, “I have been assured […] that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food.” What just happen? He wants to kill babies? He then takes his satire further by saying this will solve not only the overpopulation, but will also give England fewer unruly subjects. What’s more, it will improve the economy. Parents make profit and new delicacy will attract tourists. Despite the absurdity of his argument, he structures it in a way that the viewer has no choice but to deem it logical, despite being completely immoral. In the end, Swift accomplishes his sole goal of capturing the attention of his reader.

Arguments in the poetry of John Donne are highlighted by brilliant logical progressions, along with beautiful manipulation of the language. In *The Flea* his goal is to convince a woman to sleep with him. He accomplishes this with a three part argument: first equating a flea to their virginity, then putting this flea on a metaphorical pedestal, and finally proving the flea not a big deal at all, thus leaving virginity not a big deal either. His artistic metaphors are more prevalent in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning. “*A breach, but an expansion, like gold to airy thinness beat.” I this line he compares their eternal love despite distances apart to that of gold. As gold is stretched, it doesn't break, but only stretch thinner. John Donne’s brilliant use of logic and creative metaphors define his strong persuasive poems.

Despite their different approaches to doing so, many forms of Literature can be

persuasive. Shakespeare uses comedy along with unbiased, unhinging two-way arguments, leaving the meaning up to personal interpretation. Jonathan Swift uses satire to shock the England into action. Finally, John Donne uses well-organized logic, along with beautiful language to persuade the reader. All of these methods are unique, and all these methods are effective.